

BOOK REVIEW

LEIBOWITZ, J. O. and MARCUS S., editors: *Moses Maimonides on the Causes of Symptoms*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1974. 263 pp. \$12.00.

As was pointed out in 1964 by Bar-Sela, Hoff, and Faris, the customary title of this treatise by Maimonides (whether in the Arabic, Latin, or the present English version) is somewhat misleading, since the work is not a study of "accidents," i.e., of symptoms in general, but is instead the response of Maimonides to an elucidation of the particular symptoms suffered by al-Afdal, son and successor of the great Saladin, in the last decade of the 12th century. As Professor Leibowitz says in the introduction to the present volume, the treatise has the form of the later consilia of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Known to 16th century European physicians as *De causis accidentium*, it seems to have been left untitled by Maimonides himself. The present volume, representing the joint efforts of medical historians and specialists in Arabic, Hebrew, and Latin philology, is the outcome of the discovery, in the 1960s, of a neglected 13th century Hebrew translation of the Arabic original. The Hebrew translation is reproduced in facsimile with annotations and corrections. On facing pages an English translation of the Arabic original appears with a running commentary; this was written by Bar-Sela, Hoff, and Faris and was previously published in 1964 in the *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*. Also included is the Latin translation, most of which now appears in print for the first time. Professor Leibowitz has contributed a brief account of the medical contents of Maimonides' treatise in addition to the introduction already mentioned. A paleographic description of the Hebrew manuscript by M. Beit-Arie, a study of extant Arabic manuscripts by M. Plessner (the Arabic text itself is reproduced from Kroner's edition of 1928), comments on the medieval Latin translations by E. D. Goldschmidt and F. Klein-Franke, and a study by S. Marcus of the *materia medica* referred to in the treatise complete the volume.

Most of what Maimonides had to say for the benefit of his royal patient—who may, however, have been deposed before the work was written—has to do with regimen, that is with the management of what were later to be called the "six things non-natural," to wit: air, food and drink, sleep and watch, motion and rest, evacuation and repletion,

and the passions of the mind. This listing of the six goes back to Galen's *Technē iatrikē and Hygeiōn logos*; however, Maimonides seems to have followed Hunain ibn Ishaq's ninth century (unnumbered) listing, which included bathing and coitus as well. Maimonides' advice to the sultan on the subject of coitus recalls that given by the learned slave-girl Tawaddud to Harun al-Rashid in one of Scheherezade's tales. With respect to the melancholic passions of the mind, Maimonides recommends music and the drug ox-tongue. It is of interest to learn that some preliminary experiments, cited by Professor Leibowitz and carried out in 1970 in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, suggest an actual tranquilizing effect of a crude extract of the bark of this plant, which was known to Pliny as *euphrosynum*.

In his introduction, Leibowitz writes that the medical and physiological ideas of Maimonides, while "rooted in the Galenic tradition," nevertheless, display some "original facets." Thus, where Galen was merely well aware of the "influence of the soul on the body," Maimonides "elevates the subject of emotion and disease to a leading principle of therapeutics and integrates it into his system of medicine" (pp. 14, 15). This is a surprising and quite inadmissible claim. It was precisely Galen who first integrated the emotions into medical system—Greek, Arab, and European—and he did so by including the *psychika pathē* as the last of the six categories of the necessary, conserving causes of health and disease (the six non-naturals of European physicians). It was only for this reason that Maimonides—like any other learned physician of his day—felt called on to give attention to the management of the emotions in systematically setting forth a patient's regimen.

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